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STATE FOR IIP/G/WHA, INR/R/MR, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA  
AMEMBASSY FOR PAO, IO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [CI](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - VENEZUELA GOVERNANCE, RELATIONS WITH THE  
U.S.

¶1. On May 20, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 116,807) ran an editorial entitled, "Chavez and the U.S. Weapons Embargo." Quote:

"Caracas and Washington remain locked in a verbal dispute.... Chavez' provocative style irritates the White House.... In a year in which Chavez hopes to be reelected, we can expect the Venezuelan president to use this confrontation as a card to show Venezuelans he has clout and determination."

¶2. On May 21, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (circ. 102,000) ran an article by journalist Ascanio Cavallo, dean of the journalism school of University Adolfo Ibaez entitled, "Chavez' Horizon." Quote:

"Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has placed Evo Morales under his banner of influence in South America. To achieve this he went as far as disputing Brazil's hegemony.... Chile's political circle has treated the Chavez phenomenon lightly. It has not clearly realized that Chavez plans to gain continental hegemony...and has realized his security depends on ensuring that his main opponent in the region, the United States, has more problems and fewer friends. To this end he has chosen to ignore the principle of non-interference...and has intervened in Bolivia, is interfering in Peru and Nicaragua, will do the same in Ecuador and will find a way to do so in Brazil and Argentina. And Chile? Of course, as soon as he can.... Venezuela is the first rich opponent that Washington has had to face in the region, and one that is willing to use its money to buy Argentina's foreign debt, give oil to Cuba, garner sympathy in Bolivia's campaign (and now in Peru), finance several political groups on the continent...and cooperate with the most marginal groups: the landless and homeless.... Chavez expresses much better than Castro the discontent with globalization and capitalism...and therefore has designed a series of sub-regional agreements to sabotage the principal symbol of that order: U.S. free trade agreements.... The Chilean Foreign Ministry has chosen to be extremely prudent and neutral with occurrences on the continent...which means Chile will not have an opinion on the eventual deterioration of democracy, freedom of expression, and even human rights in those nations. It is sad...but perhaps realistic, because everything indicates that Chile currently has no choice in this new scenario.... Whether Chile likes it or not, it influences its neighbors. As a net buyer of energy it will affect the price of oil and gas, inevitably touching upon the interests of Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, and even Venezuela; as an investment exporter it must heed judicial assurances for its entrepreneurs; and as a preferential trade partner of the United States, the European Union and the Asia-Pacific region, sooner or later it must express an opinion regarding confidence in (Latin America)."

KELLY